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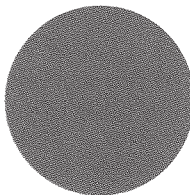
THE BENNINGTON WRITING SEMINARS ALUMNI NEWSMAGAZINE

WINTER 2006

IN MEMORIAM:

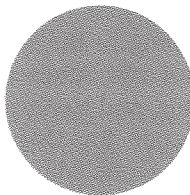
KATE BESSER

>> pages 6 & 7



**TEACHING WRITING
ONLINE**

>> page 3

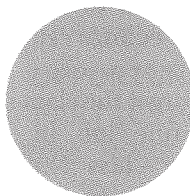


**WRITING A NOVEL
IN A MONTH**

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**STARTING AN
ONLINE JOURNAL**

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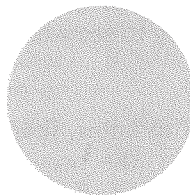


CLASS NOTES

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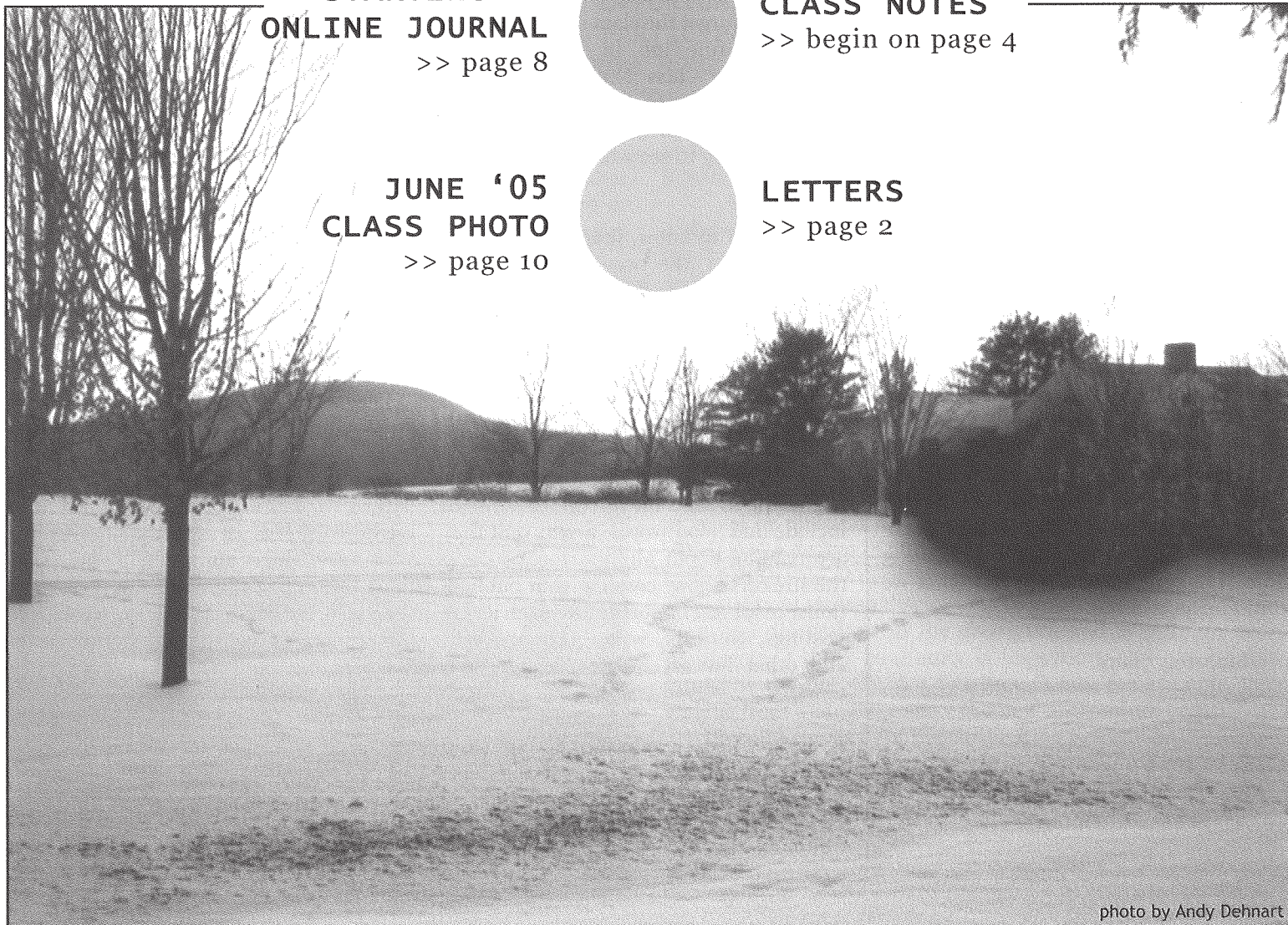
**JUNE '05
CLASS PHOTO**

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LETTERS

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FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Friends,

This issue is in many ways dedicated to the community of writing and writers, particularly the online communities explored through online workshops, literary journals, and writing events. (Many thanks to our fine contributors!) I am quite pleased with how it all came together.

And still, as a Writing Seminars alumnus, you must be quite aware of the sprawling dialogues started via Bennington-associated listservs, email groups, and the of-interest letters sent by our beloved Victoria. These flash before us, brilliant and gone again. Me, I am often left with questions of whatever ever happened with, and whatever became of, and oh, I had so much to say about that idea.

This is a good thing. And what I wish to suggest is that the *Vortex* be a vehicle for fleshing out ideas or curiosities into minor essays. It could be a starting point: begin an essay here, broaden it later. It could be an excuse to delve deeper into a curiosity.

Perhaps a spark...

Send your ideas and your essays and your interviews, your letters to the editor, your Bennington photographs. Become a guest editor, if you wish.

And then the saddest news: On December 11th, alumnus Katherine Besser passed away. My sincere gratitude goes out to Paul Eberly for writing quite a moving piece about Kate that we could include in this issue.

Sincerely yours,

andrea graham

FROM THE ALUMNI LIASON

Winter Greetings!

Staying connected to the program and to your classmates and other alumni still ranks as an important goal for many of you. Here's a list of just some of the ways many of you are keeping the spirit of the program alive in your lives of letters.

■ This *Far Side of the Vortex*, I hear repeatedly, is still a major way many of you are keeping in touch. We can't give enough thanks to Andrea Graham, our current editor, and to Andy Dehnart, our layout designer for their commitment and excellent work. Many thanks also to Meg Kelly Vorm for her work as class-notes editor and to Rob Phelps for his work as copy editor.

Not to forget the class agents for their continued fine job in helping bring together the Class Notes—thank you. Liam says he loves reading the *Vortex* and has a special interest in the class notes, wanting to see what “you maniacs” are up to.

■ It's good to know, judging from your responses to the weekly Of-Interest emails, that you're finding them helpful and “interesting” reading. Last summer, at Liam's suggestion, I began sending these weekly alum emails to Writing Seminars faculty and to Bennington College's administrative staff, too.

Now faculty and administrators are beginning to send me announcements to include and good words about what they are reading about alumni, too. So keep the stream of news coming—your publications; readings; opportunities such as job postings, contests, writer retreats, etc.; and other literary articles, events, and news.

■ In addition to submitting your news for publication in the *Vortex* and the Of-Interest emails, you are also invited to submit news to *Bennington: the Alumni*

Magazine. You likely noticed that the recent fall 2005 issue included a lot of news of alumni and faculty of the Writing Seminars.

Deadline for Class Notes submissions to *Bennington: the Alumni Magazine* is July 1 (for the fall issue) and January 1 (for the spring issue). Send your submissions to alumlett@bennington.edu.

■ Many of you continue to stay connected to the program through your generous financial contributions to the alumni-scholarship and writer-in-residence funds. We thank you for every single dollar you've given.

Your gifts have greatly helped many students attend the program. Your gifts have also helped to bring many fine writers and lecturers into the residencies as writers-in residence. Remember that you are always invited to attend readings and lectures, and we hope you'll be able to join us on campus soon.

■ Those of you who still have not checked out alum Jaime Clarke's listserv benningtonmfa@yahoogroups.com, you really are missing some juicy conversations among alumni.

■ The Bennington Collective is opening their ranks to new members in the spring of 2006, so heads up for that news.

■ As a final point, the college's new website is getting closer and closer to its launch date. The new site will offer an extensive online alumni community, including items of specific interest to Writing Seminars alumni. Stay tuned for more information soon, and in the meantime visit the current pages at www.bennington.edu for college and alumni news.

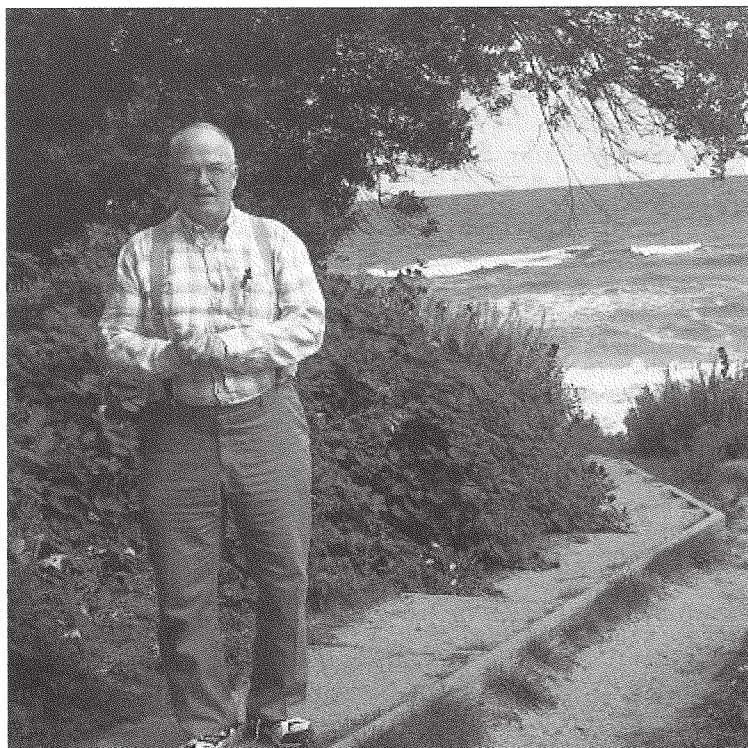
As ever,

Victoria Clausi
Alumni Liaison
and Residency Coordinator

BY WILLIAM MALES

When I say “teaching writing with help of the Internet”, the word “Internet” can drown out the rest, though I think we all agree that teaching and writing are more important than Internetting. Now, as I pronounce the word “teaching”, it erodes. The education of a writer has more to do with what is learned than with what is taught. The solitude of reading and the solitary practice of writing have served writers well for centuries. Depending on where you are in your writing life, you might be best off keeping your artistic vision to yourself, putting your words in a drawer for a year or so, then rereading them with your own new eyes, rather than feeding fragments of your creation to the meat-grinder of a workshop. Even a supportive, benevolent workshop can make hamburger of your vision.

So what is the academic study of creative writing about? It’s certainly not medical school, where you enter as a pre-med and come out a physician. The few who become professional writers through creative writing programs would probably have done so anyway. I see writing school as a liberal education aimed at learning to learn. Writing is one means we can use to support our learning. Thoughtful reading is another means, probably more important. My students say that they widen and deepen their reading—specifically become readers of poetry. This is of great cultural value, and may be as far as writing school gets you. If you want to push on toward actually becoming a writer, we’re talking a serious solo project where degrees won’t help you much, but where the habits and learning networks you invested in during school, and hopefully maintain, as a writer can serve you well.



“PEOPLE WITH ANY KIND OF SOCIAL OR PHYSICAL HANDICAP MAY PREFER INTERNET WORKSHOPS WHICH GIVE A DEGREE OF ANONYMITY AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE FROM HOME.”

The Internet-based workshop and I run, together with four other Bennington MFA’s, through a college in Sweden has metamorphosed from course to community. It’s a two-year, low residency workshop in English, 50-100% Internet, with three or four dozen paying students. Participants also include 10 salaried online teachers and 10 “alumni” who serve as unpaid mentors.

The semesters have titles like “The Art of Fiction”, “Poetry”, “Essay and Memoir”. Assignments are related to the theme of the semester, but there is also room for each participant’s own project. We have two obligatory 3-day residencies and one voluntary field trip per year.

Variations of the word “construct” probably say as much as anything about this community. It gives the participant bits and pieces of a writing life for her to put together. For example, the participant has access to a large potential public on our essentially transparent Blackboard. Everybody presents work at deadline time, can read and comment on everybody else. Among the duties of the new student is to create or join a local flesh-and-blood writing group and help run it. Among the student’s possibilities is to submit finished work to our ezine <<http://frostwriting.com/>>. The student has a pod teacher and an assistant pod

teacher with whom she can plan her methods and goals to fit her own personality and learning trajectory. The bottom line is: Do-it-yourself.

Few participants do this course completely on the net. It’s a challenge to do this and get the same quality. If you sum up the things students normally do, it boils down to 50% Internet, 50% real life. Some of our local groups have been writing and eating cake together every month for years.

For the most part, the net is grey compared to real life. There are flashes of fire which can be used to build a learning community. Response work, for example, is hot. Once participants get the hang of it, the net gives about the same equation as the classroom: The quality you get out of it is proportional to what you put in.

Internet even has certain advantages. People with any kind of social or physical handicap may prefer Internet workshops which give a degree of anonymity and an opportunity to participate from home. Workshops on Internet leave a written record. The quality of written discussions there tends to be a bit higher than oral discussions in the classroom and is certainly more egalitarian. I think continuity is important, and can be reinforced by the net. Carolyn Scarbrough has, for example, been with us from Tennessee since the new millennium began.

If you’re starting out in coordinating workshops via the net, be easy on yourself the first three years. It’s hard to really understand how different things are on the net - especially if you’re trying to do everything online. My parting shot: Why do everything online?

■ William Males (left) writes mostly about his growing up in Oklahoma, and deserting the army years ago for Sweden. He does this writing in the Bennington Collective.

Editor's note: Starting with the last issue of The Vortex, class notes were divided across the year's two issues. The next Vortex will feature notes from summer graduates, while this issue includes updates from January graduates.

JANUARY 1996

class agent Victoria Clausi
<victoriaclausi@comcast.net>

■ **GEORGE CARVER:** It's been a year since I joined Morgan Stanley as a financial advisor. I'm working on a friend's wealth management team, and find that all my life's experiences—creative, business, theater, a head for numbers—are all needed to succeed. When it all comes together in around 3-5 years, I'll have the income stream to support my family and indulge my love of writing. In the meantime, I read poetry and biography to feed my muse, and wonder if there would be a market for *Businessweek*, *A Novel*. ■ **STACEY HARWOOD:** I'd like to report my marriage, on August 16, to David Lehman. Of course we met at Bennington so I'm grateful to Liam for taking a chance on me because it changed my life in many wonderful ways. I'm writing a column for *MiPoesias*, an on-line journal (www.MiPoesias.com). I can write about anything I like. My first column ran in the November issue and was about ballet—one of my passions—in New York City. Sharon Preiss (summer '96) and I stay in regular touch and meet for writing sessions at a nearby museum cafe. She's become a successful entrepreneur with "Mobile Libris" (mobilibris@earthlink.net) her independent bookselling enterprise that handles book sales for readings, lectures, conferences, etc. My dream is to one day sell Madeleines alongside her books! ■ **ROBIN NEIDORF:** I'm working on two book proposals right now, in every spare moment, and STILL trying to finish *Fatherland*. Some day. Most days I get at least a little of my own writing time in there. Talia is fabulous, as is Andrew, actually. Family life has been good. We spent 2.5 weeks in London this summer, and it was terrific—great adventure for us all.

■ **VICTORIA CLAUSI:** I've been teaching a twice-a-month poetry workshop and putting together a reading series—POETRY AT THE LANDMARK—which is held monthly at a very cozy, downtown-Franklin, used-and-rare-books store called, yes, Landmark Booksellers. Another poet friend and I have also begun a poetry reading group that will meet monthly at the Landmark—our first read will be Jack Gilbert's book *Refusing Heaven*.

JANUARY 1997

class agent Nikki Macdonald
<Ncnmac@aol.com>

■ **JAIME CLARKE** was married over the summer, to a graduate of a rival low-residency program, with many Benningtonites in attendance: Rebecca Boyd (97), Mark Conway (98), Pete Hausler (97), Anne

McCarty (98), Michael Rosovsky (98), and David Ryan (98), as well as former associate faculty Elizabeth Searle. He currently teaches creative writing at Emerson College (as do many other Bennington alum!). ■ **LYN FRASER** has just published *Prayers From The Darkness* (www.churchpublishing.org; <<http://www.churchpublishing.org>> 1-800-242-1918), which focuses on the "difficult psalms" and integrating them into daily life. ■ As a Visiting Lecturer at the Indiana University-Purdue University regional campus in Fort Wayne, Indiana, for the 2005-2006 academic year, **DEB LEVY** has the pleasure of teaching creative writing full-time to some wonderful students. In terms of her own work, she's getting ready to send out a "bunch of stuff."

■ **MICHAEL LYTHGOE** is working with a curriculum committee for Academy for Lifelong Learning—dreaming up classes, getting instructors, and actually putting a course together—all for seniors. Recently, he met a guitarist and did artistic responses to paintings in the Columbia Art museum. Michael has four poems on-line with *Praesidium*, and one with *Innesfree Poetry Journal*.

■ **NICOLETTE MACDONALD** collected her class notes with one baby on each knee, and she's actually been writing a bit in spite of them.

■ **LAURA OREM** has been appointed a Writing Fellow at Goucher College, which means she's officially a full-time person there. No tenure, but dental insurance.

JANUARY 1998

class agent Carol Greenhouse
<catmilan@aol.com>

■ **SARAH SILBERT:** I gave birth to a baby boy, Drew Zen, on September 21st and this boy is now my whole world. I don't know when I'll write again. Right now the biggest challenge is learning how to use the electric breast pump, which feels about as pleasant as sticking one's tongue inside a Shop-Vac.

■ **DESTINY KINAL**, writing from a six-week residency at the Wurlitzer Foundation in Taos, New Mexico: I'm done—done with the book. It has a name: *Radiant Wheel*. It has an ending, an ending of much more redemption than I had imagined. The angel of Taos descended upon me and I finally experienced what so many successful novelists have said about feeling as if the story was telling itself, and the characters were doing surprising things that they seem to be generating, the words almost like channeling. All this at the end of my first week of residency.

■ **CAROL GREENHOUSE:** Since last we spoke, the magical town of Putney, Vermont, has claimed my 3-year-old daughter Zoe and me. I've also signed on as an editor for a magazine I love, *Ode* (www.odemagazine.com), and signed up for my second low-residency master's degree, this one in the field of conscious evolution, which renders the universe sacred again by reframing linear, materialistic thinking using a range of philosophies including integral theory. I often think I'll look back on these as the best days of my life. ■ **CAROLYN**

SCARBROUGH: I had a couple of slow years when the children arrived in their various ways and the adults were lost in the chaos, but I'm back to submitting and working on larger projects. I've writ-

ten daily poems since Bennington (after Robert Bly and David Lehman). This has filled notebooks and I continually find real poems there—when I have time to look. I'm also taking a stab at a big non-fiction project and circulating a poetry book manuscript. How has my writing changed? I think it's more laid back; I'm developing a more natural and confident voice. I've been teaching in William's distance class for years, the closest I've come to working in academia. Our Bennington Collective continues to sustain me, especially when the weight of domesticity presses in. ■ **WILLIAM MALES:** Since Bennington, I've been the coordinator for an English-language writing community in Sweden. The e-zine can be found at <<http://www.frostwriting.com>>. Among the 65 people involved are Bennington MFAs Rebecca Spears, Carolyn Scarbrough, Kathy Douglas and Linda Freeman, who serve as online teachers. I also continue to be involved in the Bennington Collective and a couple of Swedish writing groups. My big project is a memoir, formerly known as my novel.

JANUARY 1999

class agent Elaine Walters McFerron
<EWMCF@aol.com>

■ **PAUL BECKMAN:** I have a story out in the latest *ONTHEBUS*. I also have stories currently on line in *Clean Sheets*, *Plum Ruby Review* & *madhattersreview* (3 short shorts). ■ **RYAN BOUDINOT:** *The Littlest Hitler And Other Stories* was recently picked up by Counterpoint Press and will be published in Fall '06. My work has recently appeared in *The Best American Nonrequired Reading 2005*, *Nerve* and is forthcoming in *Stumbling And Raging: More Politically Inspired Fiction*. ■ **DIANE CAMERON:** I have just returned from a residency at the Millay Colony for the Arts where I completed a draft of my book about Marines in China. I continue to write a column for the *Albany Times Union* and *The Baltimore Sun*, and still try daily to live up to the guidelines of my writing mentor Anthony Trollope. On the hardest days I allow myself to hear Doug ask, "Are you writing?" and want the answer to be yes!

■ **ANNE DOOLITTLE:** I had two good visits with Miriam O'Neal this summer. We went to hear Alice Mattison read. Victoria Clausi and I still meet every other week during the winter months. Last winter our favorite read was *Extravagaria* by Pablo Neruda. ■ **NICOLS FOX:** My book *Against The Machine* is out in paperback and I continue to pursue the topic, *The Case Against Efficiency*, for a book. Short pieces have appeared in the *Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *The Ecologist*. In pursuit of real money I continue to sell old, new and rare books at my store Rue Cottage Books in Southwest Harbor, Maine and online through ABEbooks and Alibris.

■ **CHESTER FREEMAN:** Hoping to finish novel by end of year. ■ **ALICE DEBERRY KANE:** I remember what Lucy Grealy said about titles, how one can shape the book. My book untitled, landed in the in-basket of Ava Maria Press, former publisher Frank Cunningham. But then it came back to me. When I finally put what I considered a promising title to it, I found that I would have to

>> continued on page 9

BY ERICA LETOURNEAU

“Do you mind if I attend the NaNoWriMo Kick Off party this afternoon?” I asked my husband on the last Saturday in October. My question surprised him and all he could do was repeat, in a weak voice: “NaNoWriMo?”

He wasn't confused by the strange proper noun I'd uttered (Nan-no-Wry-mo), nor was he shy about uttering the phrase. He'd been hearing about NaNoWriMo for years. No, he was confused because I was in my first trimester of a pregnancy (read: tired and vomiting) and busy at work. I spent a small portion of my free time interacting with our three-year-old and the rest of it curled into the fetal position on our bed. What was I thinking? Why would I want to subject myself to NaNoWriMo in 2005?

To what did I subject myself? I'd signed up for National Novel Writing Month <www.nanowrimo.org/>. I was going to attempt to write a 50,000-word piece of fiction in one month, November to be exact, even though I had five deliverables due at work before the month's end and a trip to DC planned.

The brainchild of freelance writer Chris Baty, NaNoWriMo is for the average person who's thought some day I'll write a novel about that. It's even for Writers like me (with a capital W) who have written and work-shopped fiction and received MFAs in Fiction Writing. I won't detail the history of NaNoWriMo (check out the “History” link from the Website's “About” section for a complete description), but I will say that what began with Baty and 21 friends in 1999 has grown into an international event. Nearly 60,000 participants signed up in 2005—9765 of whom went on to “win” (by writing 50,000 words by the end of November).

NaNoWriMo has some rules. Though you can work on outlines or notes before the contest begins, you cannot start the actual novel until the first of November. You cannot decide that, since you'll be in Pennsylvania for 5 days over Thanksgiving, to start writing on October 27th and “skip” the days you're away. You cannot take a novel you've already started and write 50,000 additional words during November. You cannot write the same word 50,000 times. Obviously, given the nature of the contest—online, participants from around the world—these rules are unenforceable. However, to break them is to break the spirit of the contest. NaNoWriMo is about the rush of a deadline, the support of other crazy writers, and locking up your inner critic. Baty explains on the Web site: “Because of the limited writing window, the ONLY thing that matters in NaNoWriMo is output. It's all about quantity, not quality. The kamikaze approach forces you to lower your expectations, take risks, and write on the fly” (National Novel Writing Month, “What is NaNoWriMo?” <http://www.nanowrimo.org>). Sure, I

could cheat and work on a novel I'd already begun but I'd only be cheating myself out of “the gleeful, anything-goes approach that makes NaNoWriMo such a creative rush” (“General FAQ,” <http://www.nanowrimo.org>).

I've participated in NaNoWriMo the past five years. I've only won once, in 2003. So, why do I do it? For two reasons, the first being that it's only when I'm writing for NaNoWriMo that I'm able to lock my inner critic into a dark corner of my mind and not let her out (though sometimes I hear her banging on the door and cursing at me). When I start to think about letting her out, I repeat my NaNoWriMo mantra (“quantity not quality, quantity not quality”) and I push through the panic and fear and the horror that is bad writing and the next thing I know I'm starting the next chapter and I have some paragraphs of which I can be proud. Obviously, I'm hoping that eventually I'll learn from this once-a-year practice of locking her up and I'll be able to do it any time I sit at the keyboard. Even if I accomplish this, I'll still participate in NaNoWriMo because of the second reason: my local writing community.

I suppose it's possible to participate in NaNoWriMo in complete solitude, but for me part of November's magic is that while I toil in front of the keyboard, aiming for my daily goal, I know that Lucy in Jaffrey is cheering me on and that Chris in Portsmouth knows what it's like to work a full day in the office, put the kids to bed, and still find the willingness to tackle 1667 words (the quotient of 50,000 divided by 30). This is why, on that last Saturday in October, I headed to my local Border's café and looked for the neon NaNoWriMo shirt of my Municipal Liason (ML). MLs are volunteers who help organize regional NaNoWriMo events. In our little state of NH, we typically hold a kick off party (during which the ML hands out NaNo swag, such as stickers that proclaim our participation, and during which we meet other writers crazy enough to attempt writing 50k in 30 days), a few write ins (when participants meet for a couple of hours and encourage each other to reach word count goals), and a Thank God It's Over (TGIO) party (to which all are welcome—even those who didn't reach the ever-ellusive 50k).

I didn't hit 50k this year, but I'm glad I tried. I ended up with over 30 pages of draft and I'm quite fond of some of it. It's a great start that will carry me into next year. And that's what I told my husband when he couldn't believe I was going to sign up for NaNoWriMo 2005. “Even if I only write 5,000 words, I'm 5,000 words ahead of where I'd otherwise be.” Or 11,000 words ahead of where I'd otherwise be.

■ Erica Letourneau lives in central NH with her husband and daughter. She plans to edit the novel she wrote during NaNo 2003 this spring.



In Memoriam: Kate Besser, Poet



BY PAUL EBERLY

Kate Besser was part of my first “pod” in the Bennington Collective, BWS’ online alumni writing universe. That pod included two storywriters, a creative non-fiction type, an essayist, and Kate, a poet. I had never met Kate, and her presence, I admit, made me uneasy. What of value did I have to offer a poet? That unease, it turned out, was justifi-fied; I provided little that was useful to Kate. The opportunity to read her work, though, several poems each month, rewarded me, rewarded each of us, with a window into Kate’s soul—Kate’s fierce, huge-hearted, brave, lyric, loving soul.

My God, Kate was passionate in her caring for this world and for the people and creatures in it. Over the last four years, as the country geared for war, enacted it, then slipped into the ugliness of it, the anger and despair it provoked in her became a regular, if mildly contraband, component of her monthly letters to the broader Collective. She seemed to save her

anger and despair, however, for harms she observed done to others. During her two-year confrontation with cancer, she remained quick to discover grounds for optimism, to try the next conceivably helpful thing, to take joy in each possibly contingent bit of good news.

The first harbinger of Kate’s cancer, where the Collective was concerned, came in an off-hand comment in her monthly email in October, 2003. She suffered, she told us, from one of the “200+ flu viruses that attack human beings.” But several weeks later, she sent this poem (*at right*).

That call did come, and it contained the feared results.

Kate’s letters to the Collective told the story of her life with cancer (she’d have resisted the term, struggle). Swap a detail or two, and many cancer narratives would read more or less like hers. The flu that never releases its grip. Suspicions of a kidney stone. Revised suspicions of a kidney infection. Imaging. Discovery of a “mass.” More imaging. Removal of a kidney. The biopsy. The

terrifying results.

Through the two years that things weren’t easy or simple while it’s killing you, will kick you Her studio caught fire. Two dogs, third disappeared. Her mother, incapable of living unassisted, a mid-nineties, crashed her car. all this while confronting her news.

Kate kept writing. She de essayist. Her poems began to f Cancer might have killed her defeat her. Because of my own Kate and I began to email b Occasionally, we chatted on This year, while traveling Mexico, I was lucky enough to was comfortable and elegant. boisterous. Bruce, her husband, ly adored her. In fall, she and B last time as it turned out, to Lo loved fiercely. She returned, hoj experimental treatment protc

Katherine Elizabeth Besser

March 2, 1936
to December 11, 2005

Bennington Writing Seminars
Class of January 1999

she'd qualified, but her disease didn't permit it. On December 11, in the late afternoon, she died beneath the snow-capped peaks of the Sangre de Cristos, those moun-tains through which she'd once loved to hike.

Anyone who knew her had to feel caught up in the love she felt for this world. And as ones who were loved, in losing her, we're broken.

Once, responding to a tale I'd sent her for criticism, she responded with these words to the story's end: "I'm not quite sure I accept it, except as metaphor for the general crazy-ness of the world and mankind's perpetual childish belief in some sort of heaven." So, an afterlife was probably nothing she expected.

But we'll carry her, as an absence, we who continue to inhabit this world. In 2008, during the summer residency, members of the Bennington Collective have planned since its founding to meet, and to party, on Bennington's campus, at the End of the World. On that day, that absence we carry will be keenly felt.

What you must do

A mass: a lump like kneaded dough, glob, globe, agglomeration, images of nightmare, roil of worms, maggots. Excrescences: galls sucking branches, wasp nests, limpets. Energy made mass: a lodged protuberance yet to be named: nephronia, cyst, pyelo sarcoma, cancer. *There is a mass.* Skin burns: the body's embarrassment: its occult encumbrance revealed.

This pear is sweet; its juices flow like blood. That one from the same tree tastes of nothing. We want to know why. Because you drank the water, because you never took it easy but found life difficult or made it so, because you have a history, because of the big bang, because you were not good enough and must be punished- as if you'd been singled out: one kind of hubris. Because everything can be accounted for in an orderly world.

Another kind: to think everything has a purpose, to deny accident, chance, quantum mechanics, however the dice fall.

The indeterminacy principle undermines the idea of an orderly universe.

We live at random: random: the force and swiftness of a great stream.

No one knows why.

You don't know what is, will be. Forgo scenarios: images of yourself, the heroine, going alone into the dark. Do not think of yourself as doomed or charmed. Don't ask the odds or cross your fingers. Don't speak of luck as others do. Ignore predictions, instructions to think positively. Imagine nothing. The imaging is done. Let skilled diviners scan snow-filled shadows of your entrails and see what is. Like flickerings on the cave wall.

Wait. There's nothing you can do. Wait not as for a bus: counting minutes; not as children wait for birthdays, zoo days, holidays which take too long to come; not as a prisoner awaits his executioner: counting minutes. Minutes are not to be counted like white cells. Let minutes pass unnoticed: lesson one in waiting. Be still as a still life, nature morte, as one lost in that still life, time stopped by the bulbousness of vegetables, the sheen of dead feathers. Don't hold your breath. The call will come, something will be named, christened, and then? Wait.

—Kate Besser
November, 2003

BY REB LIVINGSTON

There can never be too many literary magazines. Proclaiming “too many” is a silly argument. If we cut the number of literary magazines in half, the remaining publications would not have more readers and would not see a spike in subscriptions.

The “cream” would not instantly rise to the surface saving readers from the dreaded experience of reading something mundane. Wonderful, good, so-so and crummy work would still be published. If there were only two literary magazines left in the world and they were *The Paris Review* and *Poetry*, I would still not subscribe or read them because I simply don’t care for that style of poetry. Fewer creative outlets suck. Fewer options suck. So what if Applebees draws a bigger crowd than the Jasmine Café? That’s not what literary publishing is about.

Distribution is a huge plus with online publications. Most have readerships that rival practically all of the print journals. The readership spans the globe. I prefer publishing online because I know my work will be read and to be read is why I publish. Sometimes I’m not so sure what gets read in print mags. When I publish online I almost always get comments from strangers. When I publish in print journals, sometimes a friend with work in that same issue will tell me he saw my poem.

If you want to start your own literary magazine and are considering the (very smart) online route, but have been hesitant because you’re concerned that there are just “too many out there”—stop being a dope and just do it. Below are my suggestions.

The biggest mistake online editors make is approaching their publication as if it were print. The online medium offers new opportunities. Too many online journals are stuck in the “issues” mode. Producing issues makes sense with print publications, but no sense with the fluid online medium that allows for instant publication, updates, etc.

Another mistake online editors make is not consider how people read online, which is different than how people read printed texts. Think about what has been successful (blogs, newspapers) and what hasn’t quite caught on (e-Books).

Readers like content to be top-level (i.e. they don’t want to have to click 4 things to get to an article or a poem). Readers have shorter attention spans looking at the screen. Readers become easily overwhelmed, annoyed and then leave.

An online magazine does not need a cover graphic. It does not need a “cover” period.

If you’re only publishing 2 or 4 times a year, your pub might be forgotten because yes, there are a lot (but no, not too many, never too many). If your readers are not in the habit of checking on a fairly regular basis and finding new content, they might not remember to check back when there is new content. They may not want to sign up for your mailing list and receive reminders.

If you are going to start your own online journal, get someone who has professional design experience (not a hobbyist, a friend’s teenage son, etc.), someone who understands content management, etc. You want a site that has a clean design, intu-



Reb Livingston, publisher of *No Tell Motel*

itive interface and one that *you* can use/update/change easily. It should be a design that you don’t have to re-do every issue if you decide to go down the issue route (but you should really consider the myriad of other options). Have a template you can easily modify and change. Even if you don’t update your content often, there’s no reason you can’t make it as easy. A qualified designer will be able to assess your needs and propose a solution. This is a necessary initial expense for any online publication.

For the online poetry journal I edit, *No Tell Motel* <www.notellmotel.org>, I needed an easy way to update on a daily basis, maintain an archive and manage a database of what we expect to grow to thousands of poems and hundreds of poets. I was worried we’d have to come up with an expensive custom database until I spoke to my designer and she suggested using free blogging software that met almost all of our needs (the few it didn’t, we were able to modify the existing code to work the way we needed).

This saved a lot of money and potentially months of work. I have easy-to-use software that allows me to schedule poems months in advance, automatically archive and update. I could be passed out drunk and tied up in a closet, and still every week-night at 12:01, the next poem will appear.

Lastly, if you have little or no html experience, you need to learn basic HTML. Don’t rely on others. You don’t want to be at someone’s mercy every time you want a word italicized.

■ Reb Livingston edits *No Tell Motel* <www.notellmotel.org> with Molly Arden. They are also editing the print anthology *The Bedside Guide to No Tell Motel* scheduled to be published at the end of 2005.

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revise to the title. So that's where I'm at, revising to the title. And I'm stuck. ■ **LAURA OLIVER:** I am teaching fiction writing to juniors and seniors at the University of Maryland and have renewed my interest in creative non-fiction publishing an essay in *The Washington Post* this summer. ■ **MIRIAM O'NEAL:** Check out Liam's poems and interview in the Oct/Nov issue of *American Poetry Review*. I enjoyed most how connected I felt to the poems without the weight of having said, I know this poet. A good thing, no? Also check out Dana Levin's essay in the same issue of *APR*. It's the third of three parts of *The Heroics of Style*. She explains the power of simile, as I have not heard it explained before. I got a good poem out of that reading too. ■ **ELAINE WALTERS MCFERRON:** Thrills this year: Jason's invitation to read at Cornelia Street Cafe; My chapbook *Double Solitude*, in *City Lights*, and in a window display in a bookstore on Chestnut Street in San Francisco and news that a copy was shoplifted at Women and Children First in Chicago; poem published by *Salamander*. Another thrill: Miriam O'Neal and I designed and facilitated a weekend poetry workshop: *Mining the Unknown: Writing Poems of Discovery*. It went so well we are considering taking it on the road this spring. *The Writer's Studio* is growing strong. I have students coming from the strangest places. This fall: writing new poems and working on rewrite of *The Therapist's Diary*. "The fiercest hearts are in love with a wild perfection." Stanley Kuntiz to James Dickey to James Wright

JANUARY 2000

class agent Erica Letourneau
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■ **ANNE EVANS:** I am alive and well in Napa, very pleased (no doubt that's why I'm finally chiming in here) to have a story, 'One, and Then Many,' published recently in *Eclipse*. Still directing the Napa Valley Writers' Conference, where I hope to see some of you soon. We've vastly increased our scholarship fund and can offer good fellowships. I'm also teaching private fiction and literature workshops; have done a couple of stints as well at a Wellspring Writers Retreat, in the Anderson Valley in Northern California. I feel lucky and grateful for the friendships made through writing, am convinced there are no better. ■ **TAMI HAALAND:** My poem, 'Let Deer Come Crashing,' appeared recently in *High Desert Journal*. For the past year, I have been researching the history of poetry in Montana and am currently working on an anthology with Montana's poet laureate, Sandra Alcosser. ■ **JOE ANN HART:** I am happily wrapping up the editorial notes for my novel, *Addled*, which will be published by Little, Brown in 2006. A short story of mine won the Open City Rofihe prize, and should be in print soon, and an essay is in the most recent issue of *The MacGuffin*. As I ponder the next big project, I also contemplate the future of America, and what, if anything, can be done. Sometimes I feel that I've spent too much time at my computer writing in the last decade and not enough time protesting in the streets. ■ **DANA KINSTLER (STANDEFER):** I have gone back to using my maiden name—Dana Kinstler—professionally. I am still happily married and raising two daughters in

Tivoli, New York. I have two publications forthcoming: 'My Father's New Muse' is the lead essay in a Norton Anthology, *Your Father Married My Mother*, due out spring, 2006. Another, 'My Hades History' is in a Ballantine anthology to come, called *Mr. Wrong*. ■ **ELIZABETH KNAPP:** I am currently working on a PhD in poetry at Western Michigan University, where I serve as associate poetry editor of *Third Coast*. My poems have recently appeared in *AGNI Online* and *Post Road* and are forthcoming in *Washington Square*. I am hard at work on a manuscript of poems tentatively titled *Winter's Offices*, though I have yet to write the title poem. ■ **SUSAN MAGEE:** I have been a fiction-writing slacker, but my new book *Nine Months and Counting* will be out in April. Writing it was a lot like pregnancy: harder than I thought it would be and way overdue. I taught at the University of Pennsylvania's Writer's Conference again (along with Don Silver.) I'm an adjunct professor of English at Arcadia University (formerly Beaver College—hmmm...wonder why they changed the name). Life is good! ■ **JULIA MICHAELS:** Far from the high winds and tides of gringolandia, I have yet to sell novel #1 and I am working hard on #2. At the moment the work-about revolutionaries in Brazil and China— is happily feeding on the tragic corruption scandals of the Lula government. Oh—and I'm now single! ■ **CHRISTINA RUSSO:** The show I worked on for the last few years, 'The Connection,' was cancelled so now I'm a producer at 'On Point'—another NPR show based at WBUR in Boston. I also got a new dog, named Humphrey. A chow/retriever/husky mix from Georgia. And nope, not writing at all. ■ **ERICA LETOURNEAU:** My most creative work right now is a child due out in May 2006 (hopefully I can get a copy of Susan's latest before the baby arrives). I'm gearing up for another NH winter with my husband and 3-year-old daughter. I continue to earn a living by writing dry technical manuals (SQL Reference, anyone?) but hope to transition from corporate America to crunchy, cloth-diapering-stay-at-home mom-dom in the next few months. I'm in the midst of yet another NaNoWriMo and though I'm woefully behind on my word count, it feels great to churn out the prose.

JANUARY 2001

class agents Brenda Chandler <btubby@aol.com>
and Debbie Chapel <dchapel@comcast.net>

■ **JULIE BLOEMEKE:** Phoebe Jaye Bloemeke was born on her due date (an organized girl already!) on April 28, 2005. She weighed in at 10 lbs 5.4 oz. Her birth was very spiritual, which is what I had hoped for. We had a non-medicated waterbirth and were surrounded by compassionate and wise midwives, doulas and nurses. Gareth, already four-and-a-half, adores her and we are all learning to navigate life now as a family of four. ■ **CHARISSE COLEMAN:** Still loving "Derm" NC—y'all come visit me and Ted in our "new" 60s ranch house which we're restoring to glory after a decade of the previous owner's neglect! Don Silver will stop over with us soon on his book tour, maybe in time for the "Author's Tea" I'm hosting for Triangle writers I've met. (I was inspired by a longing to use my grandmother's lovely, flowered, handpainted china "tea

and toast" sets.) I'm not writing much—too stunned by having at last finished my memoir, which is now in the hands of an agent with whom I'd really like to work (crossed fingers and small animal sacrifices welcomed for good luck). Got a NC Arts Council grant this summer; still teaching; missing the vortex and all y'all wicked bad. ■ **ALDEN JONES:** Always a bridesmaid... I received a Special Mention in *Pushcart Prize 2005* and an essay of mine (as well as one of Oona Patrick's) was named Notable Travel Writing in *Best American Travel Writing 2005*. In Fall 2006 I'll take a break from teaching at Emerson College to teach creative writing and exoticism in lit on Semester-at-Sea, sailing to China, Japan, Myanmar, India, Turkey, Egypt, and some other exciting places.

■ **REB LIVINGSTON:** I'm proud to announce neither my teeth nor hair have fallen out—yet. This past year I've given readings in NYC, Miami, Baltimore and Carrboro, NC and participated in panels in Richmond, Fairfax, VA and Rockville, MD. I'm editing *The Bedside Guide to No Tell Motel* anthology (due January 2006) with Molly Arden. My poems have recently appeared in *Coconut*, *Kulture Vulture*, *SOFTBLOW* and *MiPOesias*. In February 2005 I gave birth to my son, Gideon Hart Morrow, my happiest source of anxiety. As of this writing he has hair and one tooth. ■ **JOHN MAY:** I have finished another novel, and it's out of my hands. Don't yet know its fate but am enjoying the suspense. ■ **KRIS OHLSON:** One nice thing: a personal essay from last year was listed among the 100 notable essays of the year in *Best American Essays*. I'm off for three weeks of research in Afghanistan for an assignment and am building up a supply of headscarves for the trip. Other news? I've got both stepsons living with me—that's a big adjustment! ■ **OONA PATRICK:** I've decided to go concise with my news this time: "I moved to New York City." ■ **P.F. POTVIN:** I recently relocated to Miami Beach where I'm teaching gifted language arts, publishing pieces in places like the *The Bedside Guide to No Tell Motel*, and hosting other sun-craved Yankees on the weekends. Recent running highlights include first place overall finishes in the Superior Trail 50km and the Croom Trail 50km ultra-marathons. ■ **ANDY PRATT:** I'm very happily married, thank God, not like I was when I was at Bennington. With that wonderful love behind me I'm still doing what I have done for years, off and on, trying to be a famous musician, a totally Quixotic thing to do. It's rather frustrating, but songs of frustration are needed. Mary has two sons so I (me!) am a stepfather, another miracle. We are a nice, slightly wacky, happy family. My memoir, *Runaway Heart* has by now been read by something like thirty people and most of the ones who read it liked it a lot. Congratulations to all of you who went further. It's nice not to have to. I realize that I am just another old white man at this point but I have to obey God rather than man so I just go on with my head buzzing. I run into very strange people again and again which is probably what I am supposed to do. There seem to be a lot of us around. At this point I have more friends than ever though many of them are dead. I seem to have become some kind of alien which is as workable a way of life as anything else. I just bought a mandolin. Listen to the Mandolin Wind. Rock Steady and the Lord be with everybody.

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(left to right) *1st row*: Anna Mills, Niloufar Talebi

2nd Row: Ismael Archbold, Joseph Dequattro, Jordan Rosenfeld Pedersen,
Emily Bloch, Abbey Winant, Karen Barron

3rd row: Debra Wierenga, Stephanie King, Sheryl Glubok, Keith Pedzich,
Elizabeth Hille, Damian Rogers, Elizabeth Cox, Lynne Sharon Schwartz

4th row: Timothy Liu, Amy Hempel, Elaine McFerron, Ed Ochester, Clark Knowles,
Tracy Burkholder, Elizabeth Kennedy, Leigh Perham, Liam Rector, Bob Shacochis, Sheila Kohler

5th row: Trudy Ames, Amy Gerstler, Heri Cole, Hayden Saunier,
Jennifer Elmore, Catherine Lee-Chin

6th row: Leslie McGrath, Priscilla Hodgkins, Martha Cooley, Tom Bissell, April
Bernard, Ethelbert Miller, Virgil Suarez, Shomit Barua

7th row: Victoria Clausi, Askold Melnyczuk, Phillip Lopate,
Sven Birkerts, Jill McCorkle, Susan Cheever

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■ **RANDI TRIANT:** My essay "Horrible Endings: My Brother and the Complete Works of Saki" was published in *Post Road* and another essay based on my grad lecture, "The Art of Restraint in Fiction" came out in *The Writer's Chronicle*. On a day-to-day basis, though, I'm swamped by student essays at Boston College. ■ **BRENDA TUBBY:** Yup, going back to my maiden name—just wish it were a little more elegant! I'm a Rev. these days (interfaith) but rarely use the title, although (or maybe because) I was given the sobriquet of "rock-star minister" at ordination. I work as administrator of the Chaplaincy Institute of Maine and scramble for other odd jobs—events planning, video editing, numbers crunching... anything to pay the bills. My son's off to college, so I talk mostly to my goofy prince of a dog, who repays my attentions most royally. ■ **JIM WOESSNER:** Several years ago I made the transition from nuclear engineer to artist. Some would consider this is an unlikely combination, but science and art have much in common. Both require experimentation, exploration, and discovery and, in my case, exacting detail, since much of my work tends toward photo-realism. On the other end of the spectrum, however, my "tree" paintings have actual branches seemingly taking root in unusual abstract landscapes. My Threshold Project has moved into the corporate realm. An art- and poetry-based educational program, Threshold teaches participants how to access their "conceptual mind" and achieve greater creative potential. I continue to live on a houseboat in Sausalito, far from the winters of Vermont, thank you god.

JANUARY 2002

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■ **REBECCA BALCARCEL:** A few pubs—in *Near Texas*, *Langdon Review*, *Muse Squared*, and *Mothering.Com*. I'm also editing creative non-fiction for *amarillobay.org*. That gig has inspired me to write more CNF, though my focus in the past has been poetry. I've started to make my way in the teaching world, with presenting a paper at a conference in Boston and heading up a panel of creative writing teachers at a Texas conference (our own Rebecca Spears was on the panel too!) I'm an Associate Prof of English at Tarrant County College—can you say health insurance?! Best to you all! ■ **JUDY ROWLEY:** I won the Kaplan Prize for non fiction at *Bellevue Review*, New York University literary journal for the arts. I'm also working on essays about sound, deafness and poetry and had my first poem published in Australia, in the Nov/Dec issue of *Eureka Street*. ■ **TOM SCHABARUM:** I've been writing way too much corporate stuff and not enough fiction. I'm now currently on the Advisory Board of the Film and Video department at the University of Washington so happily back in Academia. ■ **MICHAEL SCHIAVO:** In 2005, I've had poems in *GutCult*, *The Hat*, *Good Foot*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, and *CUE: A Journal of Prose Poetry*. *CUE* also nominated a poem of mine, "Ode," for a Pushcart Prize. I have poems forthcoming from *Double Room*, *Forklift*, *Ohio*, and *The Yale Review* next year. In September, I moved to New Haven and currently work at the Yale

Bookstore, so if you have a book coming out, let me know and I'll try to order it in. You can also keep up with my various shenanigans at <http://michaelschiavo.blogspot.com> throughout the year.

JANUARY 2003

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■ **LEN EDGERLY:** *Blurbus maximus*—I have a poem and its French translation forthcoming in the next issue of *Divide*. Darlene and I studied for two months at L'Institut de Français, a language-immersion school in southern France. The blog which I created at Bennington after hearing Andy Dehnart's graduate lecture has spawned an obsessive habit at <<http://LenChronicles.blogspot.com>>. Eminem came to Denver this summer and put on a hell of a show—Lord Byron would have been proud. I'm also helping Bill Pierce and Sven Birkerts find and empty deep pockets on behalf of AGNI. ■ **NINA FORSYTHE:** I'm still working as a reference librarian in Sioux City and sending out poems now and then. My current project is a manuscript of the poems I wrote in Nicaragua, hoping I have the necessary distance now. My husband, Rob, and I are enjoying our son, Asa's, last year at home (and helping him with the college search)—next year the nest will be empty, about which I have mixed emotions. ■ **ANNE GERMANACOS:** I have work appearing or forthcoming in *Chattahoochee Review*, *Salamander*, *The Diagram*, *Pindelydyboz*, *Santa Monica Review*, *Harpur Palate*, and others. A story of mine was the recent recipient of Fourteen Hills' Holmes Award and one was also nominated for a Pushcart Prize. ■ **MARTHA KINNEY:** Hi Everybody. We are happy and busy. Lucas and Alexander are seventeen months and are healthy bustling little boys. I had poetry in *APR*, and *Fence*, and I have been writing reviews for *BookForum* and doing a few readings here and there. I miss Bennington and hope to see everyone soon. ■ **SANDRA SHEA:** I recently had the short story "House of Boys" published in *Salamander* and I'm working on a collection of essays, all related to domestic architecture. I continue to write editorials for the *Philadelphia Daily News*, and recently launched an ethics advice column under the name "Ms. Demeanor" in this, the country's most ethically-challenged city (five major indictments and counting). All right, maybe the second most, after Washington. I'm also co-teaching a journalism class at University of Delaware, for which I am drawing on many of the thousands of things I learned at Bennington. ■ **DAVID STEINHARDT:** I spent most of September in New Zealand as a press guest of that nation's first international documentary film festival, while continuing as Copy Chief for Lifestyle Media, Inc., in Manhattan. I've been a featured storyteller in the performance series *It Came From New York*, and I'm editing the memoir of an autistic science theorist, and polishing my own novelini, *The Shadow Man*, for publication. ■ **MEG VORM:** With my breeding days behind me, I sit around like all new parents do, eating bon bons and watching COPS. I still dream of being a writer and seeing some

semblance of fruition from those 25,000 little votes of confidence I staked with all of you at Bennington. I miss you all, well, most of you, you know who you are. ■ **GABE ZANE:** I brought home a dog from the pound, threw out all of my clothes from high school, lost 15 lbs., helped save the driver of an over-turned tractor trailer, protested the (stolen) election of Satan as president, drove 3000 miles cross country, spent eight days in the Black Rock Desert riding my neon pink bike and watching the Man burn, scattered my brother's ashes, and swore off all sugar and white flour, none of which pulled me out of the dank bottom of the Well, though I do have three (very old) poems forthcoming in the next (and last) issue of the *Underwood Review* and showed four tiny pieces of collage at the gallery where I work.

JANUARY 2004

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■ **DAVID HARBILAS:** I just found out that I won second place in the Pudding House Publications Give 'Em Shelter Chapbook Contest. My manuscript will be published and I'll receive some free copies. (First prize was \$1000 to the winner and another \$1000 to a homeless shelter in Columbus, Ohio in the winner's name.) *Four Corners #3* will be out in January with poems by our own Remica Bingham. Alum Leah Souffrant is now serving as reviews editor, and she'll begin the series with a review of a book by Cammy Thomas. For anyone interested in submitting, write me for guidelines at: four_corners_poetry@yahoo.com. ■ **AMIE KEDDY:** I am still teaching English at the Bement School, but this year, I've added art and tennis to my repertoire: a true Renaissance experience! The online magazine, *Free Verse* <<http://www.english.chass.ncsu.edu/freerverse/Pages/Poetry>>, accepted my poem "Singing We Did on Our Way," to be published in the December issue. ■ **JEANNIE KIM:** I've recently been awarded the prestigious Queen of Fools Award, which marks the pinnacle of my lifelong aspirations and achievements thus far. In other news, I've discovered that upside down cakes are fairly simple to make and come out damn beautiful and tasty. ■ **ANITA DARCEL TAYLOR:** Look for an interview with Phillip Lopate in *Fourth Genre*. I take credit for conducting the thing but really I was such the novice that I forced Phillip to ask and answer his own questions. Lucky for me he complied with grace. Of course. And the writing continues. ■ **CATHERINE TURNER:** Living in California, wondering why I haven't traveled more and working full-time. Getting nostalgic for Bennington, and all of my friends there. I've crossed over to the dark side, trying my hand at fiction, which is a great form of escapism, by the way. How fun it's been. (Don't tell anyone I said that.) Am running 3-4 times a week, trying to keep up our oh-so-important OC image, and

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NOTES

DISPATCHES FROM JANUARY GRADUATES

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also running a literary journal, trying to counter that very same image. We do read in Orange County. I swear. Sometimes we write, too.

JANUARY 2005

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■ **SUSAN BARR-TOMAN:** My first novel is still out on submission to publishers. I'm keeping my fingers crossed, which of course is hindering the progress of my second novel. I miss Bennington. Special thanks to Jaime Clarke for creating the Bennington Yahoo group. It makes me feel like I'm still part of a community. ■ **REMICA L. BINGHAM:** I spent my second year at the Cave Canem workshop/retreat this June and it was just as amazing as the first. I'm the new Writing Competency Coordinator at Norfolk State University, an HBCU about five minutes away from my house.

The job is cool, but I miss teaching...a lot. I've been sending work out and have interviews and poems published in *PMS*, *Crab Orchard Review* and *Gulf Coast*, among other journals. I was a finalist in the Winning Writers War Poetry Contest and the winner of the 2005 Hughes, Diop, Knight Poetry Award.

■ **BRIAN COOPER:** "How did you come to devote your life's resources to something most people would consider irrelevant?" "To move with the wind on the surface of the water. And the sun shines to the bottom." This, my question to an American windsurfer in the Dominican Republic, and her response, is all I have to say about my writing. I'm grateful to have spent another year with Joan and Nathanael. Joan says hi to everyone she met at graduation. And Nate says, "No! No!" A friend from Kenya, Beth Murugi, has joined our household while she works on her Masters. Go Vortices! ■ **MATT DEBENHAM:** My story "Depot Island" is forthcoming in the 2005 issue of *North Atlantic Review*. That's now due out in December—vs. October, which was the original pub date. Gotta love the indie journals. In the meantime, I've been working on completing more new stories and hope to have two col-

lections out—one regular, one high-concept—before my kids graduate from high school. Because then their friends will think I'm cool. Right now they just laugh and sneer and call me "Mr. Unpublished." Three-year-olds can be so mean. ■ **ERIC RAYMOND:** Living in San Francisco, I've been working on the short-short form... of advertising copy. Outside of copywriting I continue to work over my novel and send out stories. ■ **DEBRA WIERENGA:** My elbow is working again, and I finally graduated in June. I have work forthcoming (oh, I love to say that!) in *Nimrod*, *Measure*, *Diner*, and *Poet Lore*. The delightful Molly Peacock has taken me on as a student. Life is good. My best to all my classmates and teachers at Bennington—I do miss you, it, everything. ■ **DAN ZIGMOND:** I am back in California after my year of exile in Germany, and am still working on my novel. I've continued to write book reviews for the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*. My first published story will appear next year, in the collection *You Are Not Here and Other Works of Buddhist Fiction* from Wisdom Publications.